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An Economic Profile of Persons with Disabilities in Canada

Prepared for the Department of the
Secretary of State of Canada by:

David P. Ross and
E. Richard Shillington

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Introduction

Historically, there has been a lack of national level information on the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities in Canada. The *Obstacles* report, released by the federal government in 1981, contained over 100 recommendations concerning disabled persons in Canada. Among other things, the report recommended that high priority be given "to the development and implementation of a long-term strategy which will generate comprehensive data on disabled persons in Canada. . . ."[1]

In response to this recommendation, the Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS) was undertaken as a major initiative in data collection. A question concerning limitation in respondents' activities as a result of health problems was included in the 1986 Census of Population questionnaire. Those who answered in the affirmative were then included in the sampling frame from which participants in the post-censal HALS survey were selected. In addition, a sample of respondents who answered "no" to the census disability question was included in the sampling frame, to ensure the representativeness of persons with disabilities, as some less severely disabled persons might have answered "no" to the census disability question.

The HALS survey sought information from three groups: children under the age of 15 living in households; persons 15 years and over residing in households; and adults with disabilities living in institutions. Both the census and the HALS data are now available. Together, they provide the most comprehensive source of information ever available on the subject of disability in Canada. For the household survey, the sample size was 167 497 persons, consisting of 132 337 disabled and non-disabled persons aged 15 years and over, and 35 160 disabled and non-disabled persons under 15 years of age. For the survey of people living in institutions, the

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[1] *Obstacles*, Report of the Special Parliamentary Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped, February 1981.

sample size was 17 434 (disabled persons only).[2] The response rate for the household survey was 90 percent, while for the institution survey it was 97 percent.

Persons with disabilities have traditionally been viewed as recipients of health and social services, rather than as potential contributors to the country's economy. For example, the two major economic household surveys conducted routinely by Statistics Canada (*Survey of Consumer Finances* and *Labour Force Survey*[3]) for purposes of collecting income and labour-force information do not identify disability as a characteristic. Consequently, statistics on the income, poverty, unemployment, labour-force participation and occupation of persons with disabilities have never before been reliably estimated at the national level. This means that until now, it has been impossible to undertake a detailed analysis of the economic status of disabled persons and the various barriers standing in the way of their full economic participation in the labour force.

In the Report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons,[4] it was stated that "the Government of Canada, in partnership with people with disabilities, representatives of the private and voluntary sectors, organized labour, and this Committee, make the economic integration of people with disabilities a continuing national priority." The data obtained from the HALS survey provide the information needed to gain a greater understanding of who the disabled people are: their participation in the labour market; their income; the special aids and services they use and require; and some of the barriers they encounter in their efforts to reduce or eliminate the limitations on their daily activities.

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[2] For a more detailed description of the sample selection process, refer to *Highlights: Disabled Persons in Canada*. Catalogue number 82-602, Statistics Canada, 1986.

[3] Statistics Canada's *Survey of Consumer Finances* and *Labour Force Survey* are conducted on a regular basis, and are the two major surveys providing information on income and labour-force activities. Neither specifies disability as a characteristic of survey respondents.

[4] *A Consensus for Action: The Economic Integration of Disabled Persons*. Second Report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons. Bruce Halliday, Chairman, June 1990.

This report profiles persons with disabilities and their economic and labour-force status, as well as the degree of economic disadvantage they experience. It is divided into three parts. Part One develops general profiles of all persons with disabilities in Canada who are aged 15 and over and not residing in an institution. Part Two provides a more detailed economic profile of disabled persons between the ages of 15 and 64, that is, those who are generally accepted as being of working age. It also examines the data concerning the experiences of persons with disabilities in the labour market and the work-related problems they face. These experiences vary according to whether the people are employed, unemployed or not in the labour force.

The first two parts of the report are descriptive, with no attempt being made to standardize the data by age, sex, education or any other variable that might have a differential impact on disability and economic participation. They present a picture of what is, and not *why* it is.

Part Three departs from this purely descriptive approach. It presents the results of a statistical regression analysis that attempts to identify some of the factors associated with success or failure in the labour market. The institutional survey results and those relating to children under 15 are both on separate databases, and have therefore not been included in this report.

Defining the terms

In the HALS survey, the criterion for having a disability was whether any physical or mental condition limited the respondent's daily activity. Disability was assessed through an internationally standardized set of questions known as "Activities of Daily Living." This is a practical series of questions designed to identify any difficulties people have in performing their daily routines. For example, respondents were asked if they had difficulties in moving from room to room, carrying objects ten metres, dressing themselves, reading a newspaper, following a conversation, or being understood while speaking.

For the purposes of the survey, respondents who answered that they did encounter some difficulty with any one of these daily activities, and that this difficulty had been experienced for a period of at least six months, were classified as having a disability. Thus, individuals with temporary or short-term disabilities and illnesses did not qualify as having a disability. This system of identification permitted a broad range of persons with disabilities to be included in the survey, from those with mild limitations on their activities to those with severe activity restrictions.

Six types of disabilities were identified in the HALS survey questionnaire, namely, disabilities relating to mobility, agility, hearing, seeing and speaking, and mental disabilities. Each is discussed in more detail in Part One of this report, under the heading "Nature of Disability."

Survey Highlights

The 2 794 000 disabled persons in Canada who are aged 15 and over and not living in an institution clearly constitute an identifiable, economically disadvantaged group. On a proportional basis, this group represents 14.3 percent of the Canadian population aged 15 and over. The following highlights illustrate the ways in which persons with disabilities are economically disadvantaged.

1. Some of the factors most closely associated with labour-market success (as measured by earnings) for persons with disabilities of working age include the following:

    - Level of education outweighs all other factors in importance. However, although a higher level of education can make it easier to obtain work, education by itself is not sufficient to overcome all labour-force barriers. Among working-age Canadians in general, 85.6 percent of university graduates and 79.3 percent of those with a trade certificate are employed, while among Canadians with a disability, the figures are 62.3 percent and 52.4 percent respectively.

    - Whether a disabled person is male or female is the second most important factor associated with his or her earnings, ranking closely behind level of education. To be disabled and female constitutes a double employment disadvantage. However, neither this finding nor the one on education should be surprising; these same two factors are also important determinants of the earnings of Canadians in general.

    - In third place in terms of importance is severity of disability. A person with a severe disability is more likely to have lower earnings than someone with a mild disability.

    - Having a work limitation ranks fourth in importance. Because a work limitation reduces both the range of jobs available and the person's ability to perform, it can have a negative effect on earnings. However, the effects of this variable do not appear to be particularly strong, perhaps because the majority of disabled respondents had only slight work

limitations, and in the HALS survey, no adjustments were made for degree of limitation.

- Age is about equal in importance to severity of disability and work limitations. Earnings tend to decrease with age in the disabled population, with older persons generally earning less than their younger counterparts. The same pattern holds for the general working-age population, but in this group the earnings gap between older and younger persons is not as marked.

- The nature of disability also appears to explain some of the variation in earnings. Mental disability ranks first in its association with lower earnings, followed by disabilities related to mobility and vision, which are of almost equal importance. Speaking disabilities and those that limit agility follow next, showing a smaller influence on earnings. A hearing disability appears to have little negative effect on earnings. It should be cautioned that these results are undoubtedly influenced by the existence of multiple disabilities. For example, a hearing disability is least often accompanied by another disability, whereas disabilities related to agility and mobility are often found together, as are mental and speaking disabilities.

- Although limited, the survey results concerning special transportation needs and their availability were included in the analysis. Disabled persons requiring special bus or van service appear to have lower earnings than those who do not need such a transportation service, although the need for a special service may simply be an indicator of a severe disability. For example, of those who require special transportation, 87.4 percent have annual earnings of less than $5,000, compared to 66.4 percent of those who do not. It also makes a difference whether special transportation services are available locally. A larger proportion of those needing the service, but not having access to it, have zero earnings than of those who do have access to such a service.

2. Persons with disabilities have a higher rate of poverty than that found in the general Canadian population. In 1985, 15.5 percent of all Canadians aged 15 and over were classified as poor, whereas the figure for those with disabilities was 25.4 percent (710 000). Disabled women have a higher poverty rate (29.5 percent) than disabled men (20.9 percent).

3. Working-age persons with disabilities have lower total incomes (including earnings, investment income, private pensions and government benefits) than do working-age Canadians in general. In 1985, 57.3 percent of disabled individuals (1 602 000) had an annual income of less than $10,000, compared to 46.7 percent of all Canadians.

4. Unemployment rates for disabled persons of working age are higher than for the general Canadian work force. At the time of the survey in 1986, the unemployment rate for disabled persons was 15.2 percent, compared to 10.7 percent of the Canadian population. For disabled women the rate was even higher, with 16.9 percent being unemployed. Unemployment rates on their own do not give a true picture of the labour-market difficulties encountered by disabled persons. Many persons with disabilities have given up looking for employment and, as a result, have been classified as "not in the labour force" rather than as "unemployed."

5. Persons of working age with a severe level of disability and persons with a disability related to vision or a speaking or mental disability are especially disadvantaged in the labour market. Seventeen percent of severely disabled persons of working age were employed in 1986, compared to 49.4 percent of those with mild disabilities.

6. The occupational distribution of working-age disabled persons also differs from that of the general working-age Canadian population. For example, 16.1 percent of all Canadians are in management and professional occupations, compared to 9.2 percent of those who have a disability. Much the same holds for employment at the middle level, that is, semi-professional workers, supervisors and foremen/women. Within these ranks, 8.1 percent of all Canadian workers are found, compared to

6.0 percent of the disabled population. The job areas where the distribution of disabled workers is similar to that of all Canadian workers are services, skilled crafts, semi-skilled manual jobs and other (unskilled) manual jobs. However, when comparisons are made by sex, considerable differences emerge. Disabled women are more heavily represented than disabled men in service jobs, but less so in the skilled and semi-skilled trades. The largest job category for disabled women is clerical work.

7. Among unemployed disabled persons of working age, two thirds express the belief that their chances of finding a job are only fair or poor, the main reason being a lack of suitable employment opportunities. Approximately one third of the HALS survey respondents had taken special training or courses to improve their chances of obtaining a job.

Part One

Persons with Disabilities: A General Profile

This section of the report provides a general profile of Canada's adult disabled population aged 15 years and over and not residing in an institution, with relevant comparisons to the general population.

1. Extent

The HALS household survey of persons aged 15 and over estimates that in 1986, there were 2 794 000 persons with disabilities in non-institutionalized settings, representing a 14.3 percent disability rate among Canadians in this age group, or just over one in every seven.

2. Provincial distribution and rates

Table 1 and Figure 1 present information on the provincial and territorial distribution of disabled Canadians and the varying rates of disability. For comparative purposes, the table also provides information on the distribution of the general population, including both disabled and non-disabled Canadians. Most disabled persons — 38.3 percent — live in Ontario, reflecting the distribution of the population as a whole (36.5 percent of the Canadian population aged 15 and over live in Ontario). A more meaningful comparison may be drawn by looking at the rates of disability, that is, the proportion of persons aged 15 and over with a disability in each of the provinces and territories. Table 1 shows that Nova Scotia has the highest rate — 19.1 percent — and Yukon Territory the lowest, at only 9.8 percent.

Table 1

Persons with Disabilities, by Province/Territory, 1986

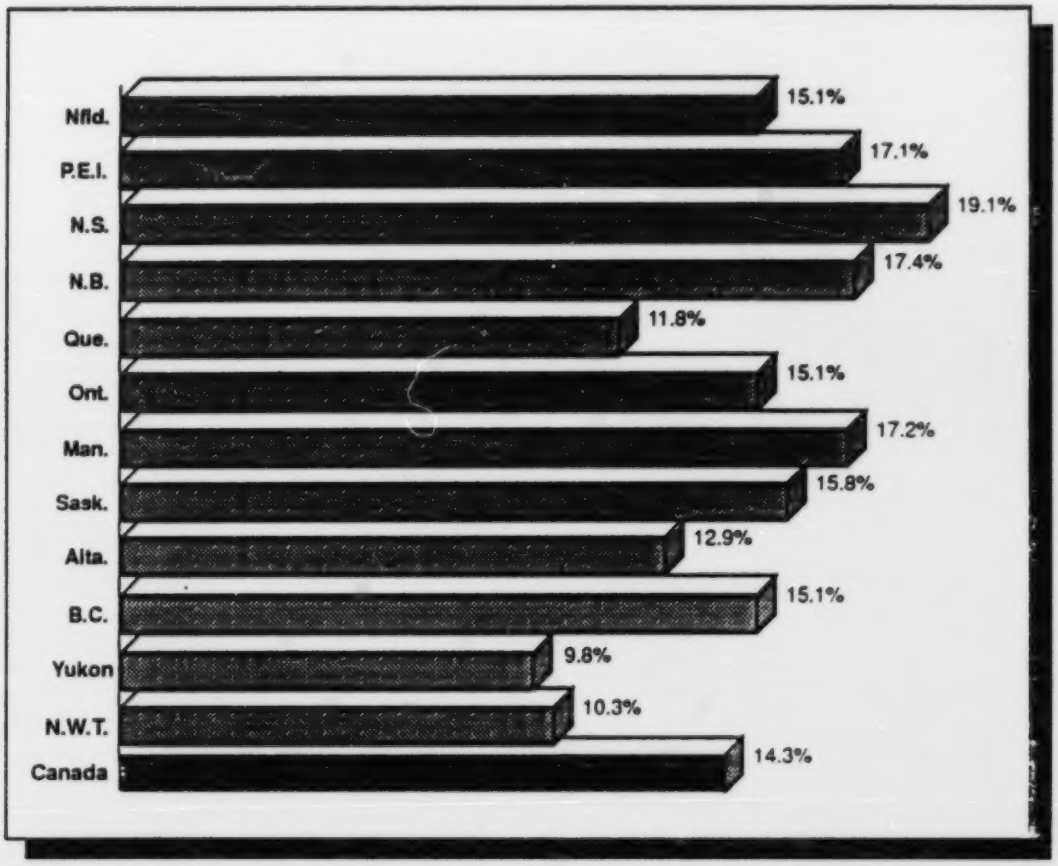
	Number (thousands)	Rate (%)	Distribution of disabled population* (%)	Distribution of general population* (%)
Newfoundland	62	15.1	2.2	2.1
P.E.I.	16	17.1	0.6	0.5
Nova Scotia	128	19.1	4.6	3.4
New Brunswick	93	17.4	3.3	2.8
Quebec	600	11.8	21.5	26.0
Ontario	1 069	15.1	38.3	36.5
Manitoba	136	17.2	4.9	4.1
Saskatchewan	117	15.8	4.2	3.8
Alberta	228	12.9	8.2	9.1
B.C.	339	15.1	12.1	11.5
Yukon	2	9.8	0.1	0.1
N.W.T.	4	10.3	0.1	0.2
Canada	**2 794**	**14.3**	**100.0**	**100.0**

* population aged 15 and over

Note: In this and all following tables, rows and columns may not always add up to 100.0 percent or to the numeric totals, due to rounding.

Figure 1

Rate of Persons with Disabilities, by Province/Territory,* 1986



* population aged 15 and over

However, a degree of caution should be exercised in interpreting these rates: disability is strongly correlated with increased age, and because the average age of the population in Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories and Alberta is lower than it is elsewhere in Canada, it follows that there are fewer disabled persons in Alberta and the territories.[5]

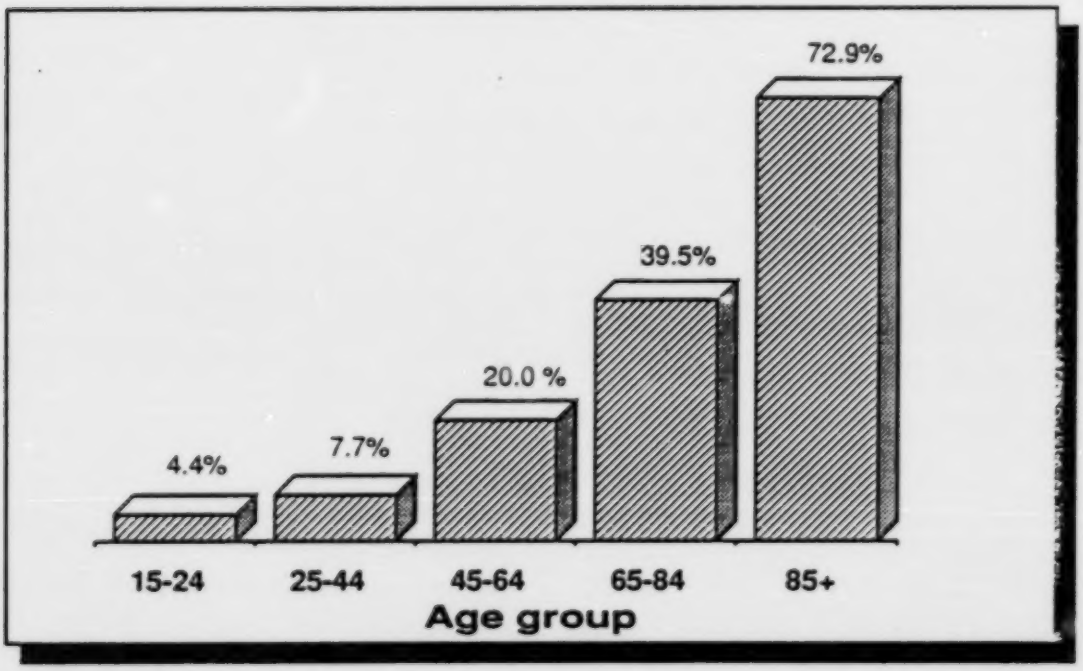
[5] However, age can provide only a partial explanation of geographical differences in the disabled population. Even after adjusting for age, there remain considerable differences, rising from a low of 11.8 percent in Quebec, to a high of 19.1 percent in Nova Scotia.

3. Demographic characteristics

Figure 2 and Table 2 present some of the demographic characteristics of disabled Canadians. The characteristics that are more highly associated with disability may be identified by comparing the respective rates at which they occur with the national rate of 14.3 percent. For example, focusing on age, those aged 85 and over have a disability rate of 72.9 percent (that is, 72.9 percent of the entire population aged 85 and over have a disability). This is five times higher than the national rate. By contrast, Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 have a rate of only 4.4 percent — about one third of the national rate. In general, the rate of disability increases steadily with age.

Figure 2

Disability Rates, by Age Group, 1986



The distribution column presents a different picture: almost two thirds (63.3 percent) of all disabled persons in Canada are under 65. Consequently, while the incidence of disability is much higher in the 65-and-over age groups, most disabled persons in Canada are younger than 65.

Table 2

Persons with Disabilities, by Selected Characteristics, 1986

Characteristic	Number (thousands)	Rate (%)	Distribution of disabled population* (%)	Distribution of general population* (%)
Age				
15-24	181	4.4	6.5	21.1
25-44	624	7.7	22.3	41.5
45-64	963	20.0	34.5	24.7
65-84	925	39.5	33.1	12.0
85*	101	72.9	3.6	0.7
Sex				
Female	1 468	14.7	52.5	51.1
Male	1 326	13.9	47.5	48.9
Role in family				
Child	183	5.5	6.5	17.1
Husband**	898	15.2	32.1	30.3
Wife**	709	12.1	25.4	30.0
Lone parent				
Female	127	18.3	4.5	3.6
Male	30	20.2	1.1	0.7
Not in family	822	23.5	29.4	18.0
Not stated	25	36.3	0.9	0.3
Canada	**2 794**	**14.3**	**100.0**	**100.0**

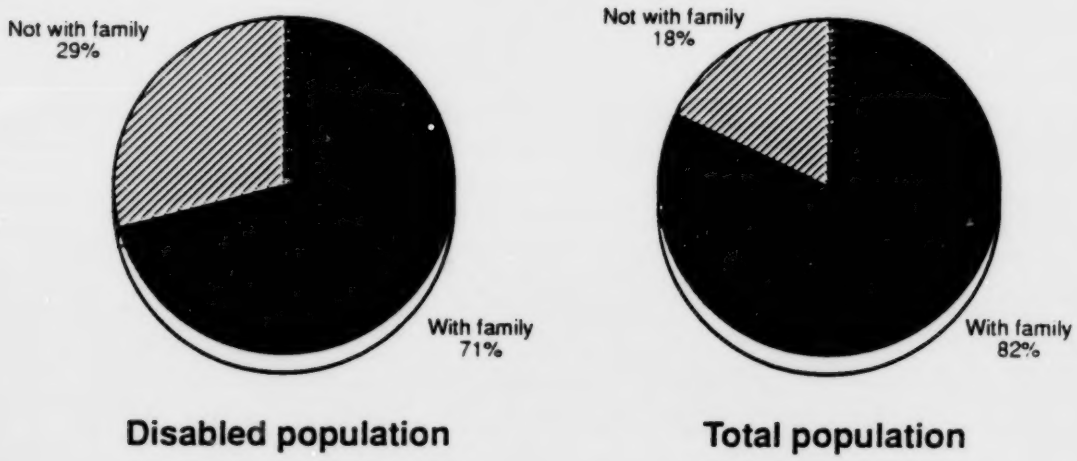
* population aged 15 and over
** includes common-law spouses

Looking at disability by sex, females have a slightly higher disability rate than males. However, they also make up a slightly higher proportion of the Canadian population. This explains, at least in part, why their proportion in the total disabled population aged 15 and over is five percent higher than that of males.

Finally, Table 2 and Figure 3 present information concerning the household or family positions occupied by persons with disabilities. In Table 2, the column presenting information on the distribution of non-institutionalized disabled persons according to this demographic characteristic indicates that almost 30 percent do not live in a family situation, but either live alone or with non-relatives. Of those living in families, only 6.5 percent are dependent children aged 15 and over, while the largest group — almost one third — are disabled husbands. Heads of lone-parent families make up only 5.6 percent of the disabled population. Among adults, the rate of disability varies considerably, rising from a low of 12.1 percent for disabled wives to a high of 23.5 percent for persons living in non-family households.

Figure 3

Family Status of Persons with Disabilities and Total Population,* 1986



* population aged 15 and over

4. Income and education

The term "income" (as used in Table 3 and Figure 4) refers to the total income received by an individual — that is, all income received, including earnings, investment income, private pensions, and government pensions and transfers. The large number of people in the under-$5,000 category can be explained by the fact that many individuals with a zero income are either dependent children or spouses without either earnings or any other source of income.

The disability rates in Table 3 show that the highest rate — 24.8 percent — is associated with people in the $5,000-$10,000 income range. Above this income level, the incidence of disability falls steadily. In the highest-income group of Canadians, only 8.4 percent have a disability.

Table 3

Persons with Disabilities, by Total Individual Income and Education, 1985

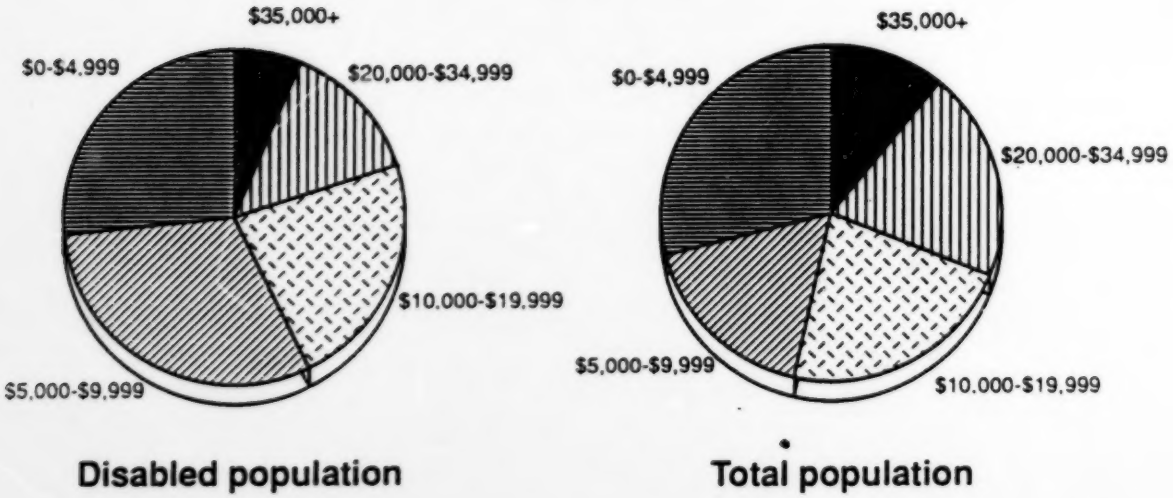
Characteristic	Number (thousands)	Rate (%)	Distribution of disabled population* (%)	Distribution of general population* (%)
Income				
$0-$4,999	747	13.2	26.7	29.0
$5,000-$9,999	855	24.8	30.6	17.7
$10,000-$19,999	633	14.7	22.7	22.2
$20,000-$34,999	382	9.7	13.7	20.3
$35,000*	177	8.4	6.3	10.8
Education				
Primary only	1 045	31.0	37.4	17.3
Some high school	716	13.8	25.6	26.6
High-school graduate	227	9.1	8.1	12.8
Trade certificate	243	12.3	8.7	10.1
Some post-secondary	212	9.8	7.6	11.1
Post-secondary certificate	232	9.3	8.3	12.8
University graduate	119	6.5	4.3	9.4
Canada	**2 794**	**14.3**	**100.0**	**100.0**

* population aged 15 and over

The distribution data show that people with disabilities are more heavily concentrated in the lower-income ranges than are Canadians in general.

Figure 4

Distribution of Persons with Disabilities and Total Population, by Income,* 1986



Disabled population **Total population**

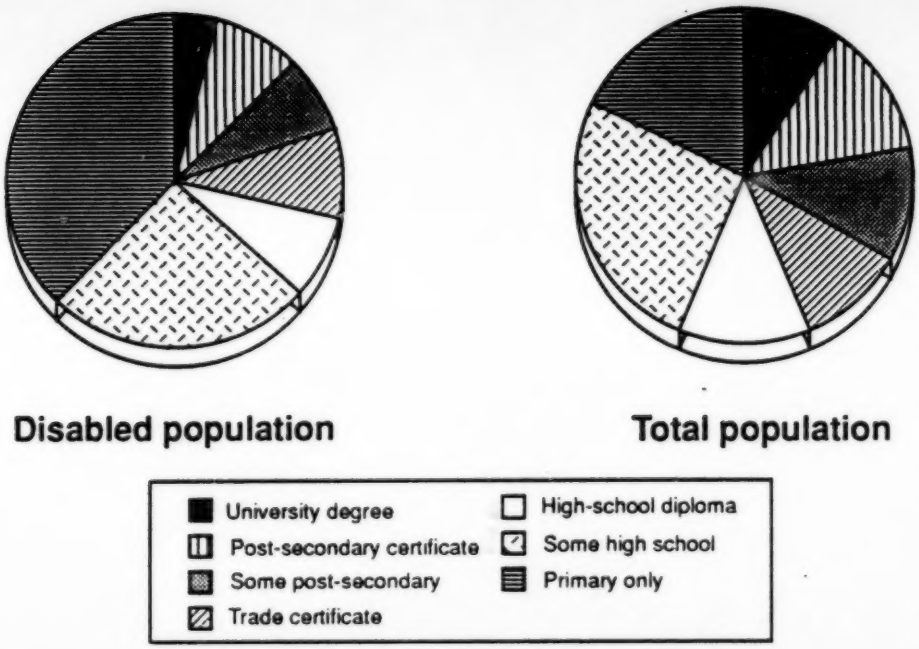
* population aged 15 and over

Well over one half (57.3 percent) of persons with a disability have an annual income of less than $10,000, compared to 46.7 percent of all Canadians. At the other end of the income scale, only 6.3 percent of disabled persons have an income exceeding $35,000, compared to 10.8 percent of all Canadians.

The data on education (see Figure 5) show that over one third (37.4 percent) of the disabled population have only a primary education, more than double the proportion found among the general population (17.3 percent). There is a noticeably high incidence of disability among persons with only primary schooling. In general, the incidence of disability tends to fall as education level increases, but this trend is not uniform.

Figure 5

Level of Education of Persons with Disabilities and Total Population,* 1986



* population aged 15 and over

5. Poverty and disability

The definition of income that is used for estimating poverty rates in Tables 4 to 6 differs from the definition of income used in Table 3. This is because the accepted convention when estimating poverty is to look at the total income available to the family or household, and not just the amount received by any one individual in the household. "Total family income" refers to all income received by a household — earnings and investment income, as well as pensions and government transfers. A "family household" is a living arrangement in which people who are related to one another by blood or marriage share a common dwelling. It also includes people living in common-law relationships.

"Poverty,"[6] a term not actually used by Statistics Canada, is nevertheless based on that agency's low-income cut-offs. The cut-off point is reached when a family is required to spend at least 20 percent more of its total income than the average Canadian family does on food, clothing and shelter, leaving little for the other requirements of daily living. No special consideration is given to the fact that many disabled people face higher costs of living. In 1985, the low-income cut-offs for large cities were: one person, $10,200; two persons, $13,500; three persons, $18,100; four persons, $20,800, and so on, up to a family size of seven.

Table 4

Persons with Disabilities who are Poor, by Severity and Nature of Disability, 1985

	Number (thousands)	Rate (%)
All Canadians*	3 029	15.5
All persons with disabilities*	710	25.4
Severity of disability		
Mild	296	23.1
Moderate	260	26.9
Severe	154	28.3
Nature of disability		
Hearing	195	22.6
Agility	407	26.5
Speaking	44	27.3
Mobility	493	27.4
Mental**	225	29.5
Seeing	134	30.0

* population aged 15 and over

** This term, used throughout the report, encompasses limitations due to learning, emotional and psychiatric disabilities, and developmental delays.

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[6] Statistics Canada does not claim to measure poverty; rather, it defines a set of income cut-offs below which people may be said to live in "straitened circumstances." From *The Canadian Fact Book on Poverty 1989*. D. Ross and E.R. Shillington. The Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa/Montreal, 1989.

When the number of poor Canadian households was estimated in 1985[7] by Statistics Canada, 25.4 percent of all disabled persons aged 15 and over were living in low-income households (see Table 4). For all Canadians in the same age group, the rate was 15.5 percent. The poverty rate varies with severity of disability (see section 7 for definition of severity); however, even the mildly disabled have a rate of 23.1 percent. The poverty rate also varies according to the nature of the disability, being lowest for persons with a hearing disability and highest for those with seeing and mental disabilities.

Table 5 shows that the poverty rate is highest among persons in the 15-to-24 age group. More than one in three disabled persons aged 15 to 24 live in poverty. The rate tends to decrease with age, reaching its lowest point in the 65-to-84 age group, at least partially reflecting the positive role played by public old age security benefits and pensions. Among those over 84 years of age, the increased rate of poverty may be attributable to two factors: the predominance of women in this older age group, who are more likely than their male counterparts to have lower lifetime earnings, and thus poorer private pension benefits; and the inadequacy of survivor benefits received by women who are widowed.

Disabled women have a much greater likelihood of being poor than their male counterparts. Even though they constitute only 52.5 percent of the disabled population aged 15 and over, women constitute 61.0 percent of all disabled persons who are poor.

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[7] Although the HALS survey was carried out in 1986, answers to all questions related to income and earnings were based on 1985 earnings and income.

Table 5

Persons with Disabilities who are Poor, by Age and Sex, 1985

	Number (thousands)	Rate (%)
All Canadians*	3 029	15.5
All persons with disabilities*	710	25.4
Age		
15-24	63	34.5
25-44	164	26.2
45-64	265	27.5
65-84	192	20.7
85*	28	27.6
Sex		
Female	433	29.5
Male	278	20.9

* population aged 15 and over

Rates of poverty are inversely related to level of education (Table 6 and Figure 6); the rate for disabled persons who have had only primary schooling is about two and a half times higher than that for disabled university graduates.

Table 6

Persons with Disabilities who are Poor, by Education and Labour-force Status, 1985

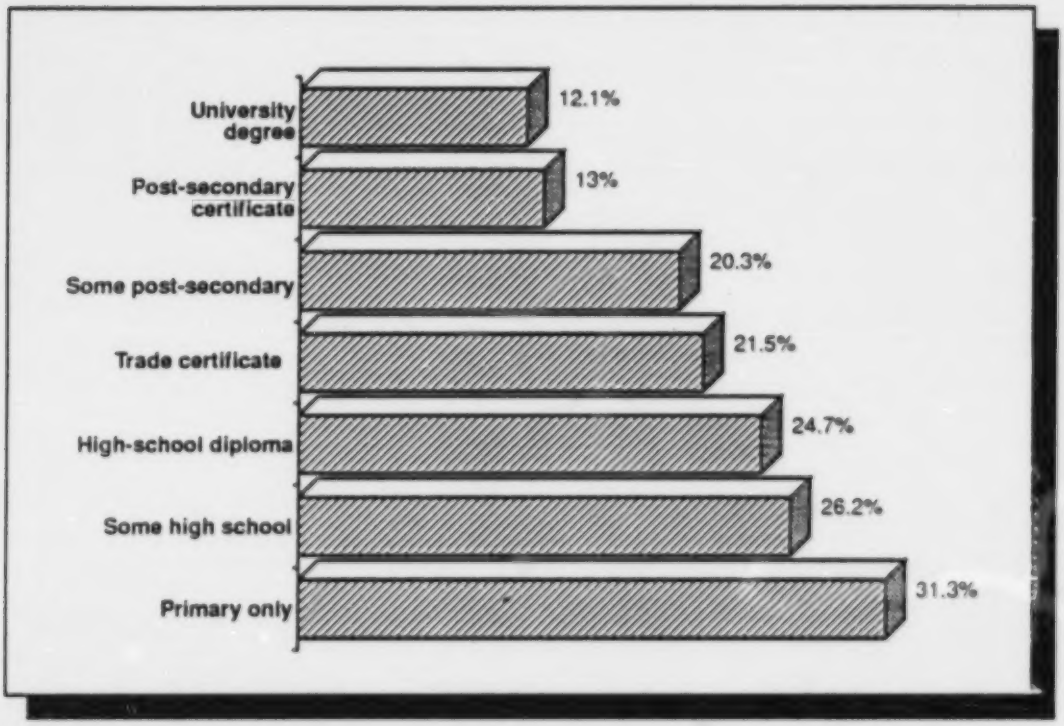
	Number (thousands)	Poverty rate (%)
All Canadians*	3 029	15.5
All persons with disabilities*	710	25.4
Education		
Primary only	327	31.3
Some high school	187	26.2
High-school graduate	56	24.7
Trade certificate	52	21.5
Some post-secondary	43	20.3
Post-secondary certificate	30	13.0
University graduate	14	12.1
Labour-force status**		
Employed	110	15.4
Unemployed	55	43.2
Not in labour force	317	35.4

* population aged 15 and over
** population aged 15 to 64

Table 6 also shows that among the working-age disabled population, the poverty rate for unemployed persons is almost three times as high as it is for those who have a job. Disabled persons who are not in the labour force are also much worse off financially than those who are employed, but not quite as badly off as those who are unemployed.

Figure 6

Poverty Rates of Persons with Disabilities, by Level of Education,* 1986



* population aged 15 and over

6. Nature of disability

The survey questionnaire classified disabilities under six headings, as follows:

mobility disability — a limited ability to walk, move from room to room, carry an object 10 metres, or stand for long periods.

agility disability — a limited ability to bend, dress or undress oneself, get in and out of bed, cut toenails, use fingers to grasp or handle objects, reach, or cut own food.

hearing disability — a limited ability to hear what is being said in conversation with one other person or two or more persons, even when wearing a hearing aid.

mental disability — limited because of learning, emotional or psychiatric disability, or because of developmental delay.

seeing disability — a limited ability to read ordinary newsprint or to see someone from a distance of four metres, even when wearing glasses.

speaking disability — a limited ability to speak and to be understood.

Table 7 presents information on the prevalence of each type of disability listed above, both among the disabled population and among Canadians in general (see also Figure 7 and Figure 8 for the proportion of disabled persons with a specific disability).

Table 7

Types of Disabilities, 1986

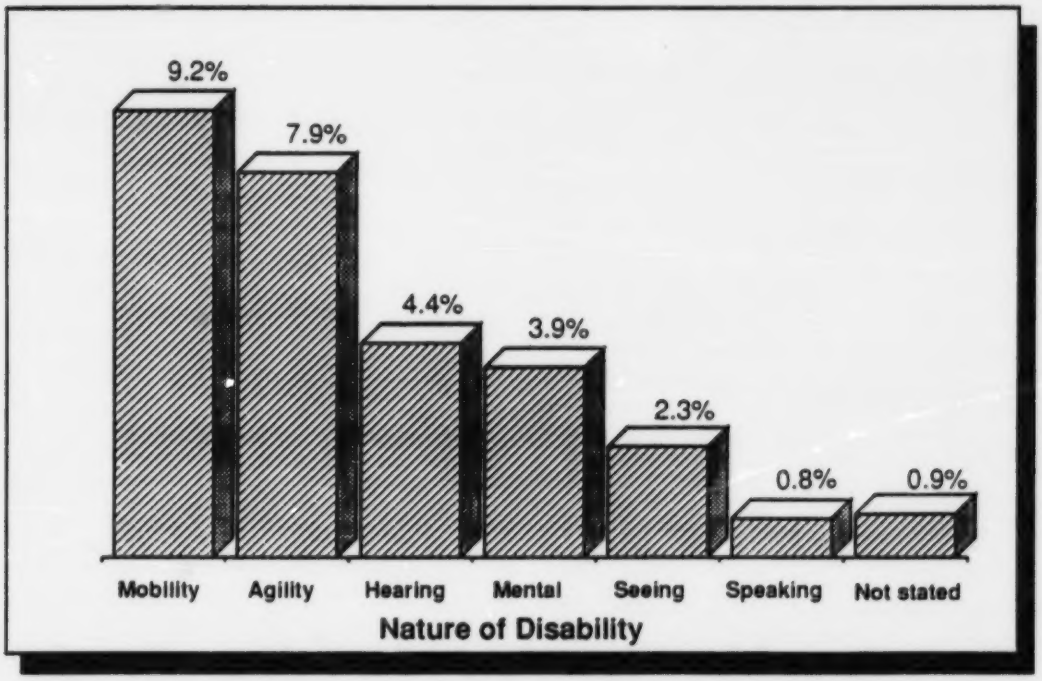
Type of disability	Number (thousands)	In disabled population* (%)	In general population* (%)
Mobility	1 801	64.4	9.2
Agility	1 538	55.0	7.9
Hearing	861	30.8	4.4
Mental	762	27.3	3.9
Seeing	446	16.0	2.3
Speaking	161	5.8	0.8
Not stated	174	6.2	0.9
Total	**5 741**	**100.0**	**14.3**

* population aged 15 and over

It should be noted that because many disabled persons have more than one disability, the total shown in column one of Table 7 exceeds the total number of disabled persons. Thus, although there are 2 794 000 people with at least one disability, a total of 5 741 000 disabilities is shown. The most common forms of disability are those related to mobility and agility: more than half of the disabled population have one of these disabilities (see column two). Column three illustrates the prevalence of the various types of disabilities in the general population aged 15 and over. For example, 2.3 percent of all Canadians have a seeing disability, compared to 16.0 percent of all disabled persons. The types of disabilities most often found in pairs are mobility and agility disabilities, and speaking and mental disabilities. Hearing disabilities are most frequently found alone.

Figure 7

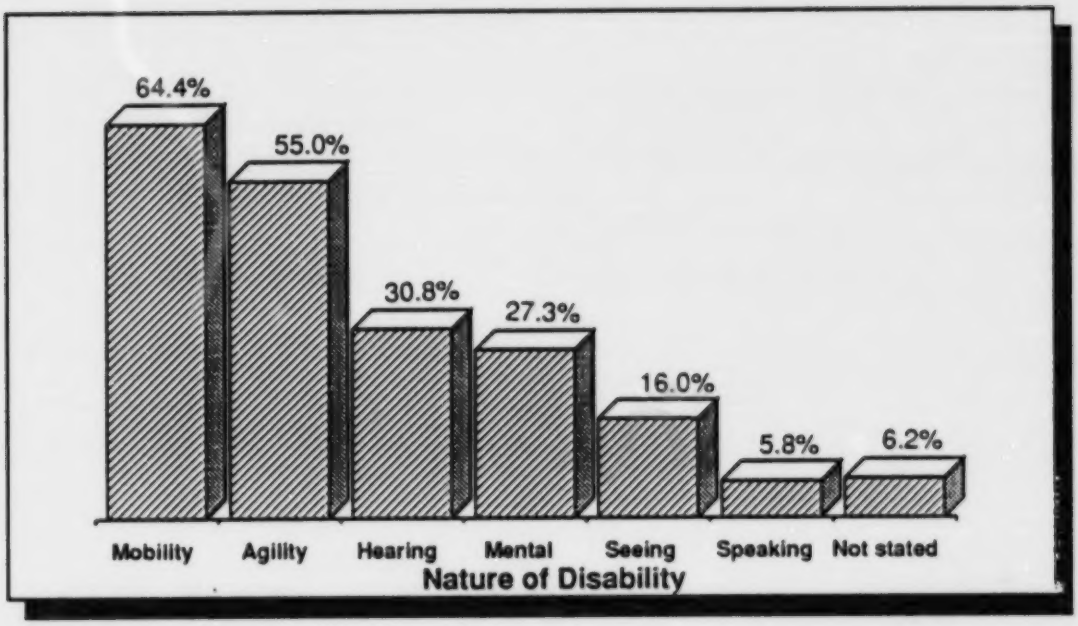
Prevalence of Disabilities in the Population, by Nature of Disability,* 1986



* population aged 15 and over

Figure 8

Proportion of Disabled Persons with a Specific Disability,* 1986



* population aged 15 and over

7. Severity of disability

Not all disabled persons are affected or limited to the same degree by their disabilities. To provide a basis for better understanding the range of limitations imposed by disability, Statistics Canada developed a scale for estimating the degree of disability. This scale is based on certain functions that people usually perform on a daily basis. The responses concerning over 20 functions were recorded, and either one or two points were assigned to each loss of function, depending on whether the loss was partial or total. The assigned points were then totalled for all functions and the totals classified into three groups: mild (1 to 4 points); moderate (5 to 10 points); and severe (11 or more points). The information presented in Table 8 cross-tabulates these measures of severity with age.

Table 8

Severity of Disability, by Age, 1986

	Number (thousands)	Distribution (%)
Age 15-24	**181**	**100.0**
Mild	121	66.5
Moderate	47	25.8
Severe	14	7.7
Age 25-44	**624**	**100.0**
Mild	372	59.6
Moderate	186	29.8
Severe	66	10.6
Age 45-64	**963**	**100.0**
Mild	420	43.7
Moderate	352	36.6
Severe	190	19.8
Age 65-84	**925**	**100.0**
Mild	356	38.4
Moderate	347	37.5
Severe	223	24.1
Age 85*	**101**	**100.0**
Mild	18	17.8
Moderate	33	32.9
Severe	50	49.3
All ages*	**2 794**	**100.0**
Mild	1 286	46.0
Moderate	965	34.5
Severe	543	19.4

* population aged 15 and over

Across all age groups, more than half (54.0 percent) of those who are disabled have moderate or severe disabilities, while 46.0 percent are only mildly disabled. However, these proportions vary considerably with age. In the youngest age group, only one in three persons have severe or moderate disabilities. These proportions increase with each successive age group, culminating in a very high rate — more than four in every five persons — among those aged 85 and over.

8. Causes of physical disability

Respondents with a *physical* disability were asked to state the cause of that disability. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Causes of Physical Disabilities that Limit Activity, 1986

Cause	Number (thousands)	Distribution (%)
Existed at birth	115	5.9
Current disease or illness	574	29.4
Past disease or illness	297	15.2
Aging	160	8.2
Accident at work	150	7.7
Motor vehicle accident	98	5.0
Other accident	129	6.6
Work environment	82	4.2
Stroke	58	2.9
Violent act	18	0.9
Other cause	99	5.1
Not stated	172	8.8
All causes	**1 950**	**100.0**

The single most common cause of disability at the time of the survey was an active disease or illness (29.4 percent). Another 15.2 percent of disabled persons had been physically disabled at an

earlier date by a disease or illness and were still experiencing its effects. Taken together, these two causes accounted for 44.6 percent of all physical disabilities. Almost one fifth (19.3 percent) of physical disabilities had been caused by some form of accident, and 11.9 percent had their origins in the workplace. In only very few cases (5.9 percent) had the disability been present at the time of birth.

9. Duration of disability

It is of limited value to know the length of time for which a person has been disabled without also knowing the person's age. For example, if a person's disability has lasted for 25 years, it is important to know whether that person is 25 or 85 years old. Recognizing this, Table 10 provides both types of information for physical and mental disabilities combined.

Table 10

Time Elapsed Since Disability Onset, by Age, 1986

Time elapsed (years)	All ages* (%)	15-24 (%)	25-44 (%)	45-64 (%)	65-84 (%)	85+ (%)
0-1	9.4	9.1	10.2	9.2	9.6	5.3
2-4	14.4	9.5	12.5	14.5	16.5	15.9
5-9	18.3	12.6	17.1	18.6	20.0	18.8
10-19	21.9	22.2	18.9	22.8	22.5	26.1
20-29	9.9	12.6	12.0	8.7	9.1	10.7
30-49	9.1	0.0	9.7	10.4	8.5	15.2
50*	4.6	0.0	0.0	5.3	7.4	5.8
Not stated	12.3	34.0	19.7	10.6	6.3	2.3
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

* population aged 15 and over

An interesting finding is that the duration of a disability does not appear to increase substantially with age. Between one half and two thirds of the respondents in all age groups reported that they had become disabled within the 19 years preceding the survey. These proportions would have been even higher if the responses in which the time of onset was not stated had been excluded from the calculation. Only 21 percent of disabled respondents over the age of 84 had become disabled before the age of 55. These data corroborate the results presented earlier: that only a very small percentage of people are born with a disability, whereas the overwhelming majority (95 percent) acquire their disabilities at various stages during their lifetime, through accident, illness or disease.

10. Type of household restriction and assistance required

Disabled persons responded to questions concerning their ability to carry out certain basic personal and household activities without assistance. Table 11 provides information on the responses to these

Table 11

Disabled Persons Requiring Household and Personal Assistance, by Type of Assistance, 1986

Type of assistance	Number requiring help (thousands)	Proportion of disabled population* (%)
Heavy household chores	1 275	45.6
Shopping	649	23.2
Daily housework	625	22.4
Personal finances	384	13.7
Preparing meals	334	11.9
Personal care	185	6.6
Moving about residence	70	2.5

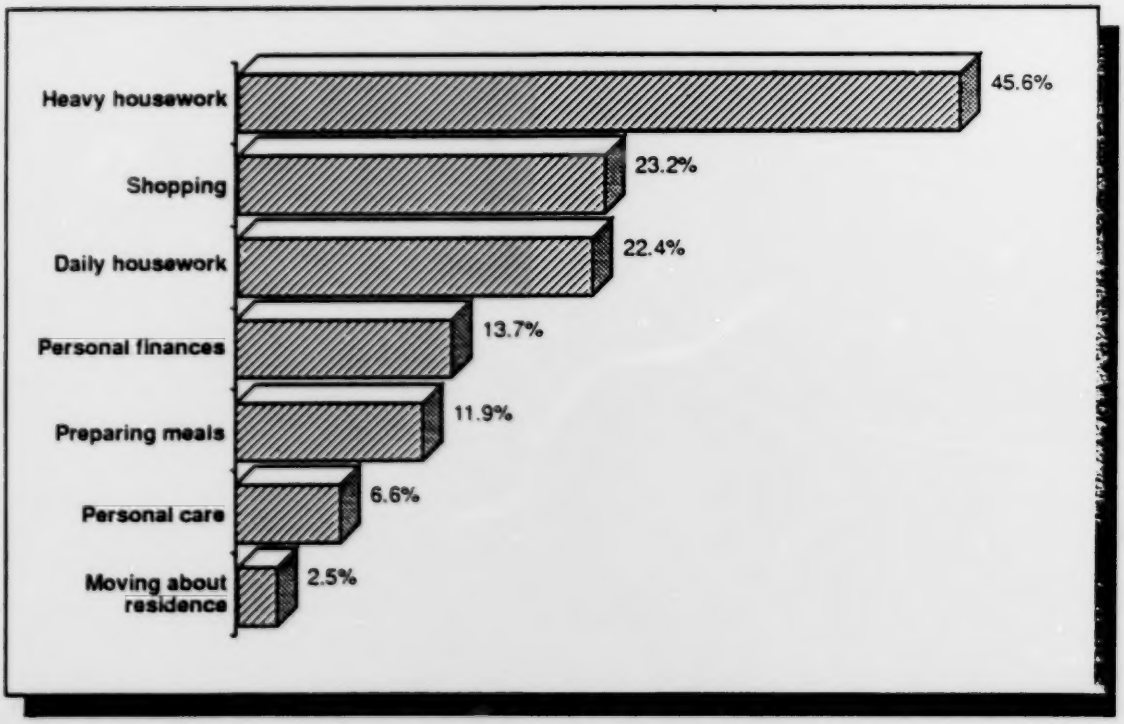
* population aged 15 and over

questions. Two explanatory notes are necessary: first, the numbers in column one do not add up to the total number of people requiring assistance, because some disabled persons require more than one type of assistance; second, the questionnaire stipulated that the need for assistance should result from a disability and not be due to some other factor.

Many people are restricted in their ability to perform routine household and personal functions (see Table 11 and Figure 9). They require assistance from family, friends, volunteers or paid care-givers. Almost one half (45.6 percent) of all disabled people require assistance in performing heavy household chores, while nearly one quarter require assistance to perform daily housework (22.4 percent) or to shop (23.2 percent).

Figure 9

Proportion of Disabled Persons Requiring Household Assistance,* 1986



* population aged 15 and over

This reliance on assistance from others to accomplish routine tasks diminishes a person's independence. In an attempt to provide some measure of loss of independence, Table 12 and Figure 10 present information on the degree to which disabled people are restricted in their activities.

Table 12

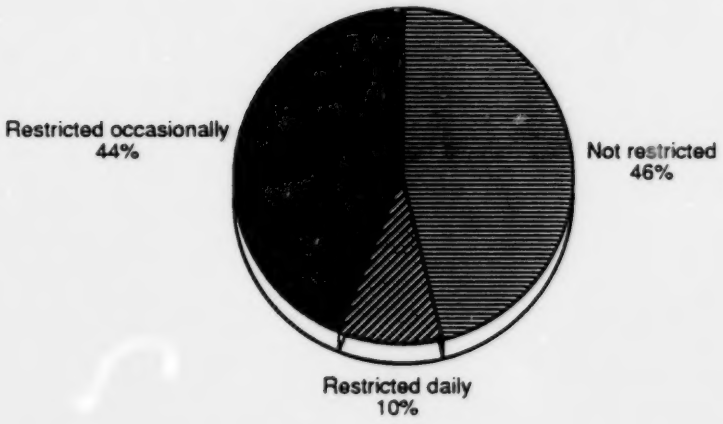
Persons with Disabilities with Household Restrictions, 1986

Restriction	Number restricted (thousands)	Proportion of disabled population (%)
None	1 296	46.4
Occasional	1 233	44.1
Daily	265	9.5
Total	**2 794**	**100.0**

Table 12 shows that of all the disabled persons surveyed, 46.4 percent reported having no restrictions on their household or personal care activities. The 53.6 percent who were restricted in some way were assigned to one of two categories based on their responses to the activities listed in Table 11. Those who said they were restricted in any of a number of specific activities (meal preparation, daily housework, personal care, moving about the home) were considered to be restricted daily. Only 9.5 percent of all disabled persons fall into this category. The remaining 44.1 percent are restricted occasionally (for example, in doing their shopping, undertaking heavy household chores or looking after their personal finances). Although somewhat restricted in their independence, these people are nevertheless able to function alone at home on a day-to-day basis — that is, without the need for outside assistance.

Figure 10

Proportion of Persons with Disabilities, by Degree of Household Restriction,* 1986



* population aged 15 and over

It should be cautioned that the proportion of persons with disabilities who are restricted in performing their household functions may understate the proportion who are restricted in their work, education and leisure activities outside the home. In many cases, households have been specially adapted to accommodate a particular disability, but this may not be the case in centres of activity outside the home. Therefore, while people may be unrestricted at home, this may not carry through to their workplace, school or recreation centre.

11. Use of and need for technical aids

Respondents with mobility, hearing or seeing disabilities were asked about their use of technical aids to assist them in coping, as well as about any unmet needs they had in this regard. Table 13 presents information on the responses to both questions.

Table 13

Use of and Unmet Need for Technical Aids, by Type of Aid, 1986

Technical aid	Number with disability (thousands)	Number/proportion using aid (thousands)	(%)	Number/proportion with unmet need (thousands)	(%)
To help mobility	1 801	416	23.1	48	2.7
To help hearing	861	259	30.1	150	17.4
To help sight	446	353	79.1	49	11.0

The use of technical aids varies considerably with nature of disability. Less than one quarter of the 1.8 million Canadians with a mobility disability use an aid, while only a very small proportion (2.7 percent) need an aid but do not have one. The proportion of those with a hearing disability who use an aid is only slightly higher, at 30.1 percent, but here the proportion of those needing an aid but not having one rises to almost one in five. Persons with a seeing disability rely most heavily on aids, with over three quarters doing so. In this group, the proportion of those with an unmet need is 11.0 percent. In total, there are 247 000 cases of unmet need (for technical aids) associated with these three disabilities.

12. Services and facilities: needs, use and availability

Survey respondents were questioned about their use of outside (paid or volunteer) social services, as well as their need for, and the availability of, special transportation and education services and facilities.

- *Social services:* Several questions were asked concerning any household or personal help provided by workers from voluntary, public or private service agencies. Table 14 shows the need expressed by disabled persons for outside social or home-care services, as well as the extent to which such services are actually used.

Table 14

Persons with Disabilities, Need for and Use of Social Services, 1986

Type of service	Number in need (thousands)	Number using service (thousands)	(%)
Meal preparation	334	81	24.3
Shopping	649	88	13.6
Daily housework	625	170	27.2
Personal care	185	52	28.1
Moving about residence	70	13	18.6

Column one presents information on the number of persons with disabilities who require assistance in performing five specific household and personal-care activities. Column two provides an estimate of the number of persons who receive assistance from an outside source. The data show that most outside assistance is used to help the person with a disability perform daily housework. Column three indicates the rate of utilization; this is obtained by dividing the number in column two by the corresponding number in column one. The resulting percentages show that approximately one quarter of disabled persons who need assistance in preparing meals, performing daily housework or attending to personal care receive such assistance from an outside source. The percentages of those who use outside help for moving about in their homes and shopping are lower.

- *Transportation:* The survey also sought information on special transportation needs. While 163 403 disabled persons responded that they needed a special bus or van service, only just above half of this number (94 901, or 58.1 percent) said such services were available in their area.

- *Education:* Survey respondents were asked whether they were attending school at the time of the survey, and 129 385 responded in the affirmative. Of these, 11 669 (8.9 percent) said that they were attending a special school for persons with a condition or health

problem. They were also asked questions about their need for, and the availability of, special equipment or arrangements at the school (special or otherwise) they were attending. An estimated 10 890 (8.4 percent) persons were either using special equipment or benefiting from special arrangements, while 5090 (3.9 percent) indicated a need for special facilities which were not being provided.

However, this relatively small proportion of respondents with unmet needs (3.9 percent) is not necessarily indicative of the number of disabled persons who would have unmet needs if all those who wanted to go to school were able to do so. Many disabled persons may be effectively barred from attending school precisely because of the lack of special arrangements. It is likely that the 129 385 disabled persons who are enrolled in school are likely to be among those with the least need for special assistance.

13. Leisure activities and restrictions

Survey respondents were asked questions concerning their leisure-time activities. Table 15 lists the responses for certain activities outside the home. The percentages shown are of the total number of disabled persons aged 15 and over.

Outside the home, by far the most popular leisure activities are visiting friends and relatives and going shopping. The majority of disabled persons participate in these activities one to four times each month. Just under one third attend religious activities or perform voluntary service one to four times per month. At the other end of the participation scale, over three quarters of all persons with disabilities never go to libraries, museums or art galleries, or visit parks or take courses.

Table 15

Persons with Disabilities, Rates of Participation in Selected Leisure Activities, 1986

Activity	<1 time/ month (%)	1-4 times/ month (%)	5* times/ month (%)	Total* (%)
Visiting friends	12.7	56.3	30.5	100.0
Shopping	16.0	51.1	32.3	100.0
Religious and voluntary activities	55.6	31.6	12.1	100.0
Attending sporting events, concerts	65.9	28.1	5.5	100.0
Other — bingos, clubs	66.1	24.4	8.8	100.0
Going to museums, libraries, galleries	77.4	19.6	1.9	100.0
Visiting parks	77.5	20.1	1.7	100.0
Taking courses	88.6	7.8	2.5	100.0

* The total does not add up to 100.0 percent because of a very small number of unstated responses.

Disabled persons were asked whether they were satisfied with the amount of time they spent on leisure activities. Of the estimated total of 2 794 000 disabled persons, two thirds (66.7 percent) said they were satisfied with the amount of time they were spending on leisure, while one third (920 000) said they would like to have done more. Persons with disabilities were asked to rate the factors preventing them from taking part more in leisure activities. Their responses are listed in Table 16.

Lack of physical ability was the major limiting factor, preventing over one half of the respondents from doing more. Approximately one quarter (23.2 percent) were physically restricted from participating more in leisure activity, either because the nature of their disability

required someone's help, or they lacked some technical aid (for example, a wheel chair or brace), or they lacked adequate transportation. The availability and cost of leisure activities was another limiting factor: over one quarter of the survey respondents felt it would be too expensive to increase their leisure activity, and about 20 percent were restricted because the available facilities were either unsuited to their condition or located too far away from home.

Table 16

Persons with Disabilities, Obstacles to Greater Participation in Leisure Activities, by Obstacle, 1986

Obstacle	Number and proportion citing obstacle	
	(thousands)	(%)
Physically unable	505	54.9
Too expensive	254	27.6
Location too far away	121	13.2
Need someone's help	100	10.9
Inadequate transportation	87	9.4
Facilities not suitable	64	7.0
Need special aid	27	2.9
Other	267	29.0

Part Two

Working-age Persons with Disabilities: Economic Profile and Labour-market Participation and Experiences

The first section of Part Two examines the economic and labour-force profiles of working-age persons with disabilities (that is, those aged 15 to 64). In particular, it examines differences between disabled men and disabled women in this area. The second section examines some of the labour-market experiences of disabled persons in relation to their labour-force status and the nature of their disability.

A. Economic Profile

The profile presented in this section has been developed by examining the following factors in relation to disabled persons: work limitations; income and earnings; labour-force status; and occupational distribution. The profile has been limited to disabled persons of working age, because although a small percentage of people over 64 remain in the labour force, their numbers are sufficiently small that they can safely be excluded from the analysis.

1. Work limitations

Survey respondents were asked whether their disability limited their work, either partially or completely. Table 17 presents the results of this question for disabled persons as a group, as well as for males and females separately. Column one presents information on the number of disabled persons with work limitations according to labour-force status, column two presents information on how many in each category have limitations, and column three presents information on the rate of activity limitation (obtained by dividing the results in column two by those in column one).

Table 17

Working-age Disabled Persons with a Work Limitation, by Sex and Labour-force Status, 1986

Labour-force status	Total (thousands)	Limited (thousands)	Rate (%)
Employed	712	378	53.2
Unemployed	128	95	74.2
Not in labour force	896	772	86.2
Not stated	32	9	28.1
Total	**1 768**	**1 256**	**71.0**
Males			
Employed	442	236	53.5
Unemployed	73	56	76.0
Not in labour force	356	318	89.5
Not stated	18	5	28.1
Total	**889**	**616**	**69.3**
Females			
Employed	270	142	52.8
Unemployed	55	39	70.9
Not in labour force	540	454	84.0
Not stated	14	4	30.7
Total	**879**	**640**	**72.8**

Almost three quarters (71.0 percent) of all persons with disabilities of working age are limited to some extent in their capacity to work. However, the proportions vary considerably by labour-force status: limitations are much more common among those who are either unemployed or not in the labour force than among those who are employed. There is not much difference between the sexes in the overall rate, but noticeable differences appear when labour-force status is taken into account. This is especially the case among those who are unemployed and those not in the labour force. According to the data, women with work-activity limitations who are

not employed are more likely than their male counterparts to be out of the labour force; however, men with such limitations are more likely than their female peers to remain in the labour force and to be classified as unemployed.

2. Total income and earnings

Table 18 presents information on both the total individual incomes and the total earnings of disabled persons of working age. The difference between these two totals is accounted for mainly by government transfer payments, disability pensions and investment

Table 18

Income and Earnings of Working-age Canadians, by Sex, 1986

Status	Disabled population			General population*
	Total* (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Total income				
$0-$4,999	37.6	24.4	51.0	31.9
$5,000-$9,999	18.1	15.0	21.3	13.7
$10,000-$19,999	18.9	21.0	16.9	21.0
$20,000-$34,999	17.3	25.9	8.7	21.7
$35,000*	8.0	13.7	2.2	11.7
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Earnings				
$0	47.0	35.4	58.6	24.9
$1-$4,999	13.4	12.7	14.1	15.8
$5,000-$9,999	7.3	6.3	8.2	11.0
$10,000-$19,999	12.1	13.9	10.3	18.3
$20,000-$34,999	14.4	21.1	7.6	19.9
$35,000*	5.9	10.6	1.2	10.1
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Canada (thousands)	**1 768**	**889**	**879**	**16 999**

* population aged 15 to 64

income. The table also shows the percentages of all disabled persons of working age in each income category, as well as the percentages of disabled men and disabled women in each. For comparative purposes, column four presents information on the distribution of income among all Canadians of working age.

Compared to the general population, a considerably greater percentage of disabled persons receive an income of less than $10,000. For all disabled persons of working age the percentage is 55.7, compared to 45.6 percent for all Canadians. Moreover, disabled persons are less likely than Canadians in general to have an income in excess of $20,000. In fact, just over one quarter of Canadians with disabilities achieve this income level, compared to one third of the general population.

There are enormous differences between the total incomes of male and female disabled persons. In 1985, more than one half (51.0 percent) of disabled women received incomes of less than $5,000, compared to only one quarter (24.4 percent) of disabled men. Moreover, only 10.9 percent of disabled women had an income exceeding $20,000, compared to 39.6 percent of disabled men.

The picture is much the same when it comes to earnings. Almost one half (47.0 percent) of all disabled persons had no earnings at all in 1985, compared to 24.9 percent of the general population; and 13.4 percent of disabled Canadians had total earnings between $1 and $5,000, compared to 15.8 percent of the general population. As with total income, women fared worse than men; 58.6 percent of disabled women had no earnings at all in 1985, whereas for disabled men the figure was 35.4 percent.

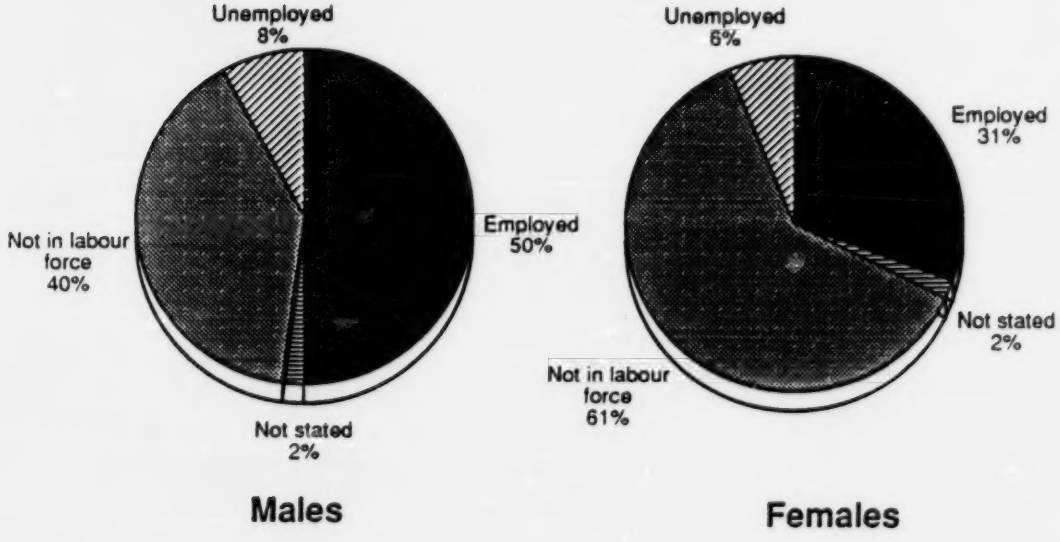
3. Labour-force status

The labour-force status of Canada's disabled population is examined in this section, first from the perspective of sex, then age, education, nature of disability, and severity of disability, in that order.

• *Sex:* Figure 11 and Table 19 present information on the labour-force status of disabled persons as a group as well as by sex, compared to that of the general working-age population. Only 40.3 percent of all disabled persons of working age have gainful employment, in contrast to two thirds of the general population. However, there is a marked difference between the sexes in this regard. Whereas almost half of all disabled men are employed, for disabled women the proportion is only 30.7 percent.

Figure 11

Labour-force Status of Persons with Disabilities, by Sex,* 1986



* population aged 15-64

Table 19

Labour-force and Employment Status of Working-age Canadians, by Sex, 1986

	Disabled population			General population*
	Total*	Male	Female	Total
Number (thousands)				
Labour-force status				
Employed	712	443	270	11 352
Unemployed	128	73	55	1 355
Not in labour force	896	356	540	4 260
Not stated	32	18	14	32
Total	**1 768**	**889**	**879**	**16 999**
Employment status	**712**	**443**	**270**	**11 352**
Full-time	562	383	179	5 592
Part-time	131	47	84	1 760
Not stated	19	13	7	0
Proportion (%)				
Labour-force status				
Employed	40.3	49.7	30.7	66.8
Unemployed	7.3	8.2	6.3	8.0
Not in labour force	50.7	40.0	61.5	25.1
Not stated	1.8	2.0	1.6	0.2
Employment status	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Full-time	78.9	86.5	66.3	84.5
Part-time	18.4	10.6	31.1	15.5
Not stated	2.7	2.9	2.6	0.0
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

* population aged 15-64

All three groups have similar proportions of unemployed persons, with disabled women recording the lowest proportion and disabled men the highest. An initial conclusion might be that disabled

persons — particularly women — have less difficulty in finding employment than do workers in the general population. However, this runs counter to the reported experiences of disabled persons. The apparent contradiction can be resolved by examining the proportions of persons not in the labour force (that is, those who are neither employed nor looking for work). While half of all disabled persons — and 61.5 percent of disabled women — are not in the labour force, the same can only be said of one quarter of the general working-age population.

The Statistics Canada definition of unemployment, and the one adopted for the purposes of the survey, is that the person must not only be *available* for work but must be *actively seeking* it as well. Undoubtedly, there are many disabled persons who have become discouraged and given up looking for work. This means they have officially dropped out of the "unemployed" category and into the "not-in-the-labour-force" category, even though they want work. The responses related to the survey questions in a later section confirm that the employment prospects of disabled persons are indeed poor.

It should also be pointed out that the *proportions* of unemployed persons shown in Table 19 are not the same as unemployment *rates* (not shown in the table). Unemployment rates are calculated by dividing the number of unemployed persons in each group by their numbers in the labour force (that is, employed and unemployed combined). At the time of the survey, unemployment rates for the four groups concerned were: general working-age population, 10.7 percent; all disabled persons, 15.2 percent; disabled men, 14.2 percent; and disabled women, 16.9 percent. These rates, rather than the proportions, give a more accurate reflection of the difficulties disabled persons face in finding employment.

However, as already mentioned, even unemployment rates can be somewhat misleading. This is because a large number of persons with disabilities are out of the labour force, not because they do not want work but because they have become discouraged in their search for employment. There is no doubt that if those disabled persons who had given up looking for work although they still wanted it were classified as being unemployed, the unemployment rates would be much higher.

Among persons with disabilities who are employed, there are substantial differences according to sex with respect to whether the employment is full- or part-time. Table 19 shows that 84.5 percent of all working-age Canadians are employed full-time, a proportion similar to that for disabled males. In contrast, only about two thirds of disabled women are full-time employees.

- *Age:* The data in Table 20 show that age has a bearing on labour-force status. The disabled population aged 25 to 44 has the largest proportion of employed persons and the smallest proportion of persons not in the labour force. The 45-to-64 age group appears to be the most disadvantaged from a labour-market standpoint, with only 30.6 percent being employed.

Table 20

Labour-force Status of Working-age Disabled Persons, by Age, 1986

Age	Number (thousands)	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	Not in labour force (%)	Total (%)
15-24	181	42.5	10.5	45.3	100.0*
25-44	624	54.3	10.1	34.1	100.0
45-64	963	30.6	4.9	62.4	100.0

* The total does not add up to 100.0 percent because the labour-force status of a very small number of respondents was unstated.

Comparing the proportions of those employed in the three age groups of disabled persons to those in the working-age population as a whole, the general pattern remains the same. However, there are some differences. Among those aged 15 to 24, 25 to 44 and 45 to 64 in the general population, the proportions of employed persons are 56.2 percent, 76.5 percent and 59.6 percent respectively.

There are two notable differences between persons with disabilities and the general population. First, although in the general population the proportions of employed persons in the oldest and youngest age groups compare favourably with one another, the proportion of older workers found among disabled persons is much lower than the proportion of younger workers. Second, only half as many disabled persons aged 45 to 64 are employed as in the general population, whereas among those aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 44 respectively, the difference is much less striking. From an employment standpoint, therefore, older working-age persons with disabilities are at a greater disadvantage than those who are younger.

- *Level of education:* The data in Table 21 show that employment disadvantage decreases with level of formal education. The proportion of disabled university graduates who are employed is almost three times higher than that of employed disabled persons who have only primary education.

Table 21

Labour-force Status of Working-age Persons with Disabilities, by Level of Education, 1986

Level of education	Number (thousands)	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	Not in labour force (%)	Total (%)
Primary only	510	22.3	5.7	70.2	100.0*
Some high school	491	39.4	7.8	51.3	100.0
High-school diploma	166	43.8	9.0	42.9	100.0
Trade certificate	182	52.4	9.0	36.6	100.0
Some post-secondary	151	50.0	8.0	40.4	100.0
Post-secondary certificate	176	58.9	6.5	33.8	100.0
University degree	91	62.3	7.0	30.3	100.0

* The total does not add up to 100.0 percent because the labour-force status of a very small number of respondents was unknown.

The education pattern for disabled persons is similar to that of the general working-age population. However, disabled persons, even when they have a university degree, are comparatively disadvantaged with regard to employment. Whereas in the general population, 85.6 percent of university graduates and 79.3 percent of people with a trade certificate are employed, in the disabled population the figures are 62.3 percent and 52.4 percent respectively.

The survey asked respondents to date the onset of their disability (the first disability, in the case of more than one) relative to the completion of their highest level of schooling. This information, presented in Table 22, was used to examine the relationship between time of completion of education and labour-force status. The results are presented in Table 23.

Table 22 shows that almost three quarters (73.2 percent) of all disabled persons of working age who were not in school at the time of the survey had become disabled after completing their highest

Table 22

Working-age Persons with Disabilities no Longer in School, Onset of Disability Relative to Completion of Education, 1986

Time of disability onset	Number (thousands)	Proportion (%)
Before completion of schooling	**362**	**22.0**
Primary only	76	4.6
Some high school	94	5.7
High-school graduate	38	2.3
Trade certificate	32	2.0
Some post-secondary	40	2.4
Post-secondary certificate	50	3.1
University graduate	32	2.0
After completion of schooling	**1 197**	**73.2**
Not stated	**79**	**4.8**
Total	**1 638**	**100.0%**

level of schooling. Where the onset of disability had preceded the completion of schooling — that is, in approximately one quarter of the cases — no pattern emerged according to level of education. Those who had completed primary school only, and had become disabled before completion, constituted only 4.6 percent of the disabled population of working age. University graduates who had become disabled before receiving their degree constituted 2.0 percent of this same group.

Table 23 shows that people who had become disabled prior to completing their education were more likely to be employed at the time of the survey than those whose disability had occurred subsequent to completion.

Table 23

Working-age Persons with Disabilities no Longer in School, Onset of Disability Relative to Completion of Education, by Labour-force Status, 1986

Labour-force status	Before completion (%)	After completion (%)
Employed	52.4	37.0
Unemployed	10.2	6.4
Not in labour force	36.6	55.0
Not stated	0.8	1.6
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

These results suggest two possible interpretations: first, that those who became disabled before completing their education were more likely to be younger, and thus to have had more opportunity to plan ahead and to adapt their future work lives accordingly; second, that recognizing the employment disadvantage of having a disability, they took steps to extend their formal education and training.

• *Nature of disability:* Table 24 looks at the relationship between the nature of disability and labour-force status. In interpreting this information, the reader should keep in mind that the labour-force status associated with a particular disability does not necessarily represent that disability only, but perhaps a combination of disabilities which include that particular one. This explains why the total in column one exceeds the total number of disabled persons of working age.

Table 24

Labour-force Status of Working-age Persons with Disabilities, by Nature of Disability, 1986

Nature of disability	Number (thousands)	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	Not in labour force (%)	Total (%)
Mobility	1 048	32.3	6.9	59.2	100.0*
Agility	917	33.3	6.9	58.2	100.0
Hearing	417	46.9	5.2	46.0	100.0
Mental	496	28.4	7.9	62.0	100.0
Seeing	204	26.5	6.7	64.9	100.0
Speaking	107	28.3	5.0	64.8	100.0
Not stated	149	57.3	8.3	33.7	100.0

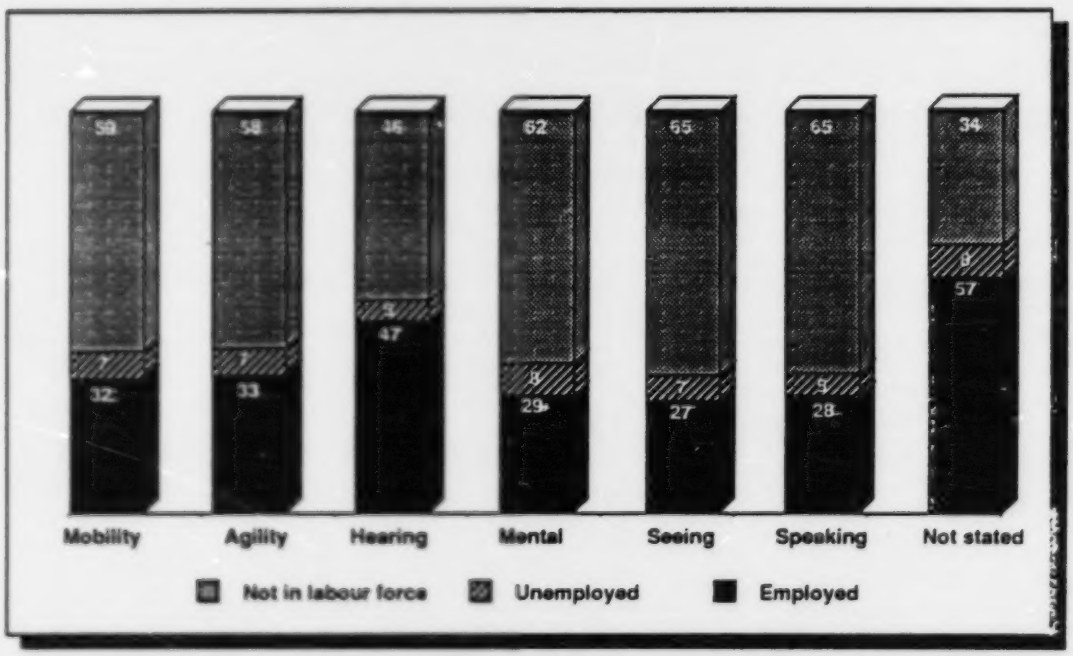
* The total does not add up to 100.0 percent because the labour-force status of a very small number of respondents was unknown.

Labour-force status varies considerably according to disability. Persons who have a hearing disability appear less disadvantaged from an employment standpoint than those with disabilities of other types, especially mental, seeing or speaking disabilities. However, because many people have more than one disability, the influence of any particular disability on labour-force status cannot be accurately determined. For example, a hearing disability may be no less disabling than any other single disability, but the very fact that it is found in isolation more often than any other disability may explain why it causes less employment disadvantage (assuming that multiple disabilities increase a person's employment disadvantage).

On the other hand, the survey shows that mental and speaking disabilities are frequently found in combination with one another. Consequently, all that can be concluded with certainty from the data presented in Table 24 and Figure 12, is that, on average, less employment disadvantage is associated with the presence of a hearing disability — whether alone or in combination with some other disability — than with any other disability or combination of disabilities.

Figure 12

Labour-force Status of Working-age Persons with Disabilities, by Nature of Disability, 1986



• *Severity of disability*: Table 25 presents information on the relationship between the severity of disability and labour-force status. It shows that severity of disability has a striking influence on the chances of finding employment.

Table 25

Labour-force Status of Working-age Persons with Disabilities, by Severity of Disability, 1986

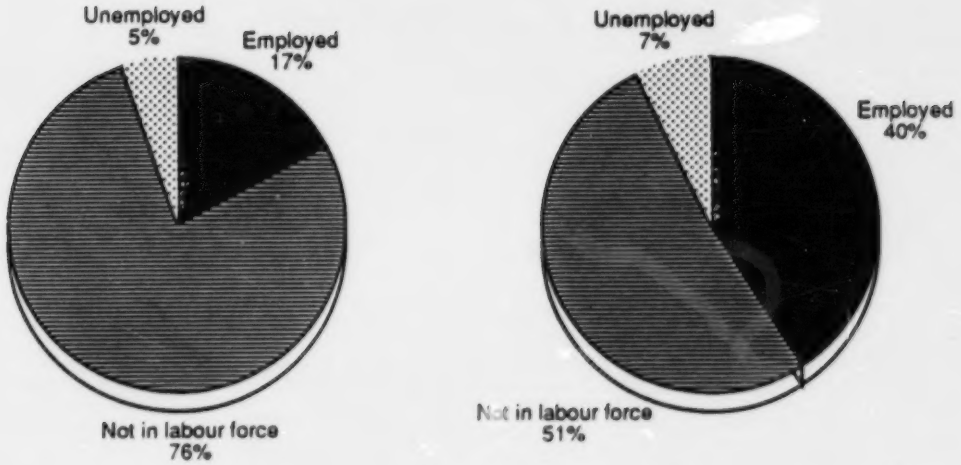
Severity of disability	Number (thousands)	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	Not in labour force (%)	Total (%)
Mild	913	49.4	8.5	40.0	100.0
Moderate	584	36.6	6.3	55.7	100.0
Severe	271	17.0	4.8	76.4	100.0
Total	**1 768**	**40.3**	**7.3**	**50.7**	**100.0***

* The total does not add up to 100.0 percent because the labour-force status of a very small number of respondents was unknown.

The proportion of persons with mild disabilities who are employed is more than twice as high as the proportion of employed persons with severe disabilities. As explained earlier with respect to unemployment, the proportions do not portray a very accurate picture of disadvantage. Certainly, one would not expect the true proportion of unemployed persons who are severely disabled to be about half as high as that of mildly disabled persons, as Table 25 suggests. A more accurate picture may be obtained by looking at the proportions of persons with disabilities not in the labour force, which is the status of over three quarters of those with a severe disability. This is because many persons with a severe disability know from experience that there is little hope of finding employment, and have therefore stopped looking.

Figure 13

Labour-force Status of Working-age Persons with Disabilities, 1986



4. Occupational distribution

Table 26 shows the occupational distribution of all persons with disabilities. Male and female sub-groups are presented separately, as is the general working-age population. All persons with a disability of working age are under-represented in the managerial and professional ranks, compared to their counterparts in the population at large. While 16.1 percent of all Canadian workers are in these upper-level job categories, the figures for disabled men and disabled women are 10.9 percent and 7.5 percent respectively.

Table 26

Occupational Categories of Working-age Canadians, by Sex, 1986

Category	Disabled population			General population*
	Total* (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Upper-level managers	0.5	1.0	0.1	1.2
Other managers	3.2	4.7	1.6	5.4
Professionals	5.5	5.2	5.8	9.5
Semi-professional workers and technicians	2.6	2.1	3.1	3.7
Supervisors	1.7	1.7	1.8	2.1
Foremen/women	1.7	3.0	0.4	2.3
Clerical workers	9.4	4.7	14.2	13.3
Salespersons	4.9	5.2	4.6	6.6
Service workers	7.1	5.0	9.1	8.1
Skilled crafts and tradespersons	5.8	10.7	0.8	6.3
Semi-skilled manual workers	6.0	10.4	1.5	6.7
Other manual workers	11.8	16.2	7.3	12.3
Not stated	39.9	30.1	49.8	22.5
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Total (thousands)	**1 768**	**889**	**879**	**16 999**

* population aged 15-64

Note: The "not-stated" category represents mainly those who are not in the labour force and who consider themselves to be without a paid occupation.

The same general picture holds for those in middle-level jobs (semi-professional workers, supervisors and foremen/women). Within these ranks are found 8.1 percent of all Canadian workers, 6.8 percent of disabled men and 5.3 percent of disabled women. The representation of disabled workers in the grouping that includes services, skilled crafts, semi-skilled manual jobs and other (unskilled) manual jobs is similar to that of all Canadian workers. However, when comparisons are made by sex, considerable differences emerge. Disabled women are much more heavily

represented than disabled men in service jobs, and much less well represented in the skilled and semi-skilled trades. Also, there are more disabled women in clerical jobs than in any other occupational category (14.2 percent, compared to 4.7 percent of disabled men).

One of the most noticeable differences among the four groups is in the proportions of workers declaring no occupation at all. It is assumed that, in most cases, the "not-stated" job category represents people without an occupation. While only one in five of all Canadian workers regard themselves as being without an occupation, this proportion rises to 39.9 percent for all persons with disabilities. For disabled men it is 30.1 percent, and for disabled women, 49.8 percent.

B. Labour-market Experiences and Problems

Survey respondents were questioned concerning their labour-market and employment experiences. Different questions were asked depending on whether the disabled person was employed, unemployed or not in the labour force at the time of the survey. This section examines the responses to some of these questions, with particular attention given to the role played by the nature of the disability.

1. Employed persons

Table 27 presents information on the responses given by employed disabled persons when asked whether they had had certain labour-market experiences. It should be noted that the numbers in the bottom row do not add up to the total number of disabled employed persons surveyed, since many respondents had more than one type of disability. Also, all questions were introduced with a statement that the employment experience concerned must have resulted from the disability and not from any other factor.

Over two thirds of disabled workers with a speaking disability said they had difficulties in changing or improving their jobs, compared to less than one third of those with a hearing disability. Approximately

50 percent of workers with other types of disabilities said they had such difficulties. About the same proportion said there were limitations on the type or amount of work they could perform. Those with a speaking disability reported considerably more limitation, while those with a hearing disability reported less.

Table 27

Working-age Employed Persons with a Specific Disability, by Labour-market Experiences, 1986

Experience	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking (%)	Mental (%)
Difficulty in changing or bettering job	48.1	51.1	51.7	29.7	67.0	52.5
Limitation on kind or amount of work*	52.5	52.4	43.6	24.3	57.4	49.7
Employed in sheltered workshop	2.4	2.8	7.5	1.1	17.1	10.5
Special work facilities or arrangements available*	6.8	8.2	8.5	6.5	12.1	10.3
Refused employment in past five years	6.0	6.1	9.9	6.0	14.3	9.4
— more than five times	2.0	2.1	2.2	1.3	6.0	3.0
Total (thousands)	**339**	**305**	**54**	**195**	**30**	**141**

* applies to current job

The responses to two other questions clearly show that very small percentages of workers with a disability are employed in sheltered workshops, or benefit from special work facilities/arrangements on the job. However, those who have either speaking or mental

disabilities are most likely to be found in special employment situations, while those with hearing or mobility disabilities are least likely to be employed in such situations.

In general, less than 10 percent of employed disabled workers had been refused employment in the five years preceding the survey; however, some had been refused employment more than five times. Those most heavily affected — persons with a speaking disability — were also more likely to report other negative employment experiences. About one in 16 workers with a speaking difficulty had been refused employment more than five times in the five years preceding the survey.

Respondents were asked to rate their chances for advancement in their present jobs, and Table 28 presents information on their responses. In general, about one half of employed disabled workers believed their prospects for advancement were only fair or poor.

Table 28

Working-age Employed Persons with a Specific Disability, by Perceived Advancement Prospects in Present Job, 1986

Prospect of advancement	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking (%)	Mental (%)
Excellent	10.6	9.6	5.0	10.8	3.3	8.9
Good	23.8	24.0	30.8	27.4	15.7	24.4
Fair	17.7	18.8	15.9	15.8	20.7	16.3
Poor	31.3	31.1	31.9	28.3	39.6	34.7
Not stated	16.6	16.5	16.3	17.7	20.6	15.7
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Not all of the reasons for respondents' pessimism were related to their disability, and estimates of their prospects varied with the nature of the disability. Respondents who rated their chances of advancement as fair or poor were asked whether this pessimistic assessment was the result of their condition. The breakdown of

those who rated their chances of advancement as fair or poor because of their condition was as follows: speaking, 50.0 percent; mental, 40.3 percent; seeing, 38.5 percent; agility, 30.9 percent; mobility, 28.9 percent; and hearing, 18.6 percent. Workers with a seeing, mental or speaking disability were more likely to rate their chances of advancement as being fair at best because of their disability.

2. Unemployed persons

Certain employment-related questions were asked of those disabled persons who were unemployed at the time of the survey. This section examines their responses. It should be remembered that to be included in the "unemployed" category, respondents had to be without a job and actively seeking employment.

Table 29 presents information on the responses given by unemployed disabled persons when asked when they had last worked. Over 80 percent had worked within the five years preceding

Table 29

Working-age Unemployed Persons with a Specific Disability, by Date of Last Employment, 1986

	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking* (%)	Mental (%)
Last employed between 1981-86	86.9	87.1	88.6	89.8	72.7	80.3
Last employed before 1981	9.4	9.0	7.5	7.3	20.5	14.1
Never employed	1.6	1.5	2.5	2.5	4.4	4.7
Not stated	2.1	2.3	1.4	0.4	2.4	0.9
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Unemployed (thousands)	**73**	**63**	**14**	**22**	**5**	**39**

* These estimates should be used with caution because of the small size of the sample of unemployed persons with a speaking disability.

the survey. Among those with a speaking disability, however, the proportion was 72.7 percent, the lowest recorded for any type of disability.

Unemployed disabled persons were asked what they thought their chances were of getting a job. Table 30 shows that regardless of the nature of disability, over two thirds thought their chances were poor or fair at best. For those with a speaking or mental disability, the figure is over 83 percent.

Table 30

Working-age Unemployed Persons with a Specific Disability, by Perceived Chances of Getting a Job, 1986

Perceived chances	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking* (%)	Mental (%)
Excellent	2.5	2.7	4.8	3.1	0.4	0.5
Good	14.5	14.9	8.3	10.6	7.4	4.9
Fair	22.4	26.1	25.4	27.7	22.8	41.8
Poor	46.1	44.8	51.0	47.3	64.5	42.0
Not stated	14.4	11.5	10.4	11.4	4.8	10.7
Total**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

* These estimates should be used with caution because of the small size of the sample of unemployed persons with a speaking disability.

** The numbers in this table do not take account of those persons responding that they could not have accepted employment for various reasons in the week immediately preceding the survey.

In the vast majority of cases, low ratings were directly related to nature of disability. Respondents who rated their chances of getting a job in the next six months as fair or poor were asked whether this pessimistic assessment of their job prospects was the result of their condition. The proportions who felt that because of their condition, their chances of getting a job were fair or poor, by type of disability,

were as follows: speaking, 87.9 percent; agility, 78.5 percent; mobility, 77.1 percent; mental, 73.5 percent; seeing, 68.4 percent; and hearing, 62.0 percent.

Tables 31 and 32 focus on unemployed disabled persons with work limitations. Table 31 examines four factors that may make the job search difficult for those with work limitations. The proportion of respondents who had experienced employment difficulties because of inadequate physical access to the workplace, lack of special aids or inadequate transportation was quite small — less than 10 percent in all cases. By far the greatest difficulty encountered was the lack of suitable employment opportunities.

These responses may have been influenced by the high national levels of unemployment prevailing in 1985 and 1986 — 10.5 and 9.5 percent respectively. Transportation, physical access and special equipment and facilities assume importance only if jobs are available in the first place. Transportation is not regarded as an employment barrier when there is no job to go to.

Table 31

Percentage of Working-age Unemployed Persons with a Disability and a Work Limitation, by Factor Making It Difficult to Find Work, 1986

Factor	Number	Percentage
Inadequate physical access to buildings	4 845	5.1
Lack of special aids, equipment or assistance	2 485	2.6
Inadequate transportation	9 075	9.6
Lack of suitable employment	35 185	37.0

Note: These numbers are too small to allow for a reliable breakdown by nature of disability.

Table 32 examines the responses concerning certain labour-market experiences. Over 85 percent of all unemployed respondents, regardless of the nature of their disability, claimed that their work limitation affected the type or amount of work they could perform. A much smaller proportion said they had a reduced ability to look for work. Among those who said they had difficulty looking for work — almost 50 percent — those with seeing problems reported having the most.

Table 32

Percentage of Working-age Unemployed Persons with a Specific Disability and a Work Limitation, by Labour-market Experiences, 1986

Experience	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking* (%)	Mental (%)
Have limitation on type or amount of work able to perform	86.8	86.6	86.6	89.6	90.8	85.7
Have reduced ability to look for work	41.3	42.2	52.0	45.5	48.7	47.0
Have been refused employment in past five years**	24.0	25.5	52.5	37.9	41.3	33.7
Have taken special training to improve job chances	23.9	23.5	37.6	35.1	33.6	32.1

* These estimates should be used with caution because of the small size of the sample of unemployed persons with a speaking disability.

** due to disability, as perceived by the respondent, and not to other factors

Whether or not unemployed persons with a disability had been refused employment in the preceding five years because of their disability varied considerably according to disability type. Slightly less than one quarter of those with a mobility disability had been

refused employment, while more than half of those with a seeing disability had experienced such a refusal. Table 32 also shows that approximately one third of respondents had taken special training in order to improve their job prospects. Those with a seeing disability were the most likely to have availed themselves of training opportunities, while those with mobility and agility disabilities were the least likely to have done so.

3. Persons not in the labour force

This section focuses on persons with a disability who were not in the labour force at the time of the survey. To be classified as "not in the labour force," a person must be neither employed nor looking for work. The group includes those who desire paid work but have become discouraged and given up looking for it.

Table 33 presents data on those not in the labour force at the time of the survey, according to when they had last worked at a paid job. It shows that the vast majority had either never worked at all or had

Table 33

Distribution of Working-age Persons with a Specific Disability Not in the Labour Force, by Date of Last Employment, 1986

	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking (%)	Mental (%)
Last employed between 1981-86	37.1	38.0	30.4	38.2	21.9	29.9
Last employed before 1981	43.3	42.3	40.9	39.2	28.8	37.7
Never worked	15.2	15.2	24.4	16.5	43.0	26.8
Not stated	4.4	4.6	4.3	6.1	6.3	5.6
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Not in the labour force (thousands)	**620**	**533**	**40**	**73**	**15**	**91**

not done so for at least five years. The responses varied by type of disability, and those with a speaking disability were the least likely to have worked recently or ever to have worked at all.

The data in Table 34 provide insight into the relationship between having a work limitation and not being in the labour force. A work limitation affects approximately 90 percent of disabled persons not in the labour force, with about three quarters having a complete work limitation. In fact, having a work limitation appears to be the main reason why so many persons with disabilities are not in the labour force.

However, whether a disability actually causes a work limitation depends on certain factors — for example, the state of the art and availability of technical aids, and the suitability of the jobs available. To reduce the restrictive effects of disabilities on employability, technical aids and assistance need to be improved and made more accessible, and more suitable jobs need to be made available.

Table 34

Distribution of Working-age Persons with a Specific Disability Not in the Labour Force, by Degree of Work Limitation, 1986

Degree	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking (%)	Mental (%)
Complete	76.2	76.8	78.4	66.6	78.2	75.2
Partial	13.9	13.9	11.3	13.2	10.4	12.7
None	6.1	4.9	6.3	14.6	5.2	6.6
Not stated	3.8	4.5	4.0	5.5	6.3	5.4
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Tables 35 and 36 relate only to persons with a disability who are not in the labour force but are able to work (that is, they are not completely limited in their work activity). The data show that such persons are kept out of the labour force by many obstacles besides that of being refused employment. Table 35 provides information on

some of the factors that make it difficult to find employment. As was the case with unemployed disabled workers, the main difficulty is lack of suitable employment opportunities. The other three factors listed appear to be relatively unimportant by comparison. However, as previously explained in the discussion on unemployed workers, the high levels of unemployment that prevailed in 1985 and 1986 may have temporarily outweighed other factors in perceived importance.

The degree to which any particular factor makes it difficult to find employment varies according to the nature of the disability. For example, those with a seeing or speaking disability are affected much more by a lack of special aids, equipment or assistance than those with other types of disabilities. Those with a seeing disability are most affected by inadequate transportation, followed by those whose disability affects their agility; however, transportation is not a major source of concern for those with other types of disabilities. Lack of suitable employment is a relatively important factor across the board, but especially for those who have a seeing or speaking disability. It is least important to those with a hearing disability.

Table 35

Percentage of Working-age Persons with a Specific Disability Not in the Labour Force but Able to Work, by Factor Making it Difficult to Find Work, 1986

Factor	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking (%)	Mental (%)
Inadequate physical access to buildings	2.7	2.9	1.2	0.6	1.2	1.2
Lack of special aids, equipment or assistance	2.5	3.1	9.0	1.9	7.4	2.8
Inadequate transportation	5.6	6.2	12.1	3.1	4.5	3.8
Lack of suitable employment	19.8	22.2	37.3	11.7	28.5	21.8
Not in labour force but able to work (thousands)	**124**	**100**	**23**	**54**	**11**	**60**

Table 36 shows that among those not in the labour force but able to work, only a small proportion had looked for work in the two years preceding the survey. Whether they had done so was related to the nature of disability. The data show that those with a speaking or mental disability are the most active job-seekers. They are also most likely to say they want a job. Less than 7 percent of those not in the labour force, regardless of the nature of their disability, had taken special training to improve their job chances, with only slight differences among the various types of disabilities.

Table 36

Percentage of Working-age Persons with a Specific Disability Not in the Labour Force but Able to Work, who Sought Work in Last Two Years and Took Special Training, 1986

	Mobility (%)	Agility (%)	Seeing (%)	Hearing (%)	Speaking (%)	Mental (%)
Looked for work in past two years	14.5	17.5	15.6	9.3	22.7	20.7
AND:						
• wanted a job last week	9.1	11.7	8.5	5.3	12.3	13.0
• took special training to improve job chances	4.2	4.3	4.1	2.3	5.4	6.6

Part Three

Factors Associated with Success in the Labour Market

The links between the characteristics and situations of persons with disabilities and their labour-market success are examined in this section.

The Analysis

As already noted, some characteristics appear to be more closely associated with a certain labour-force status than others. The discussion is based on the results of a correlation and regression analysis that attempted to further define the most important factors associated with success in the labour market. Only the conclusions, and not the statistical methodology and testing employed, are presented in this report,[8] the intention being to present only a "first-run" statistical analysis. An in-depth analysis would have been beyond the scope of this project.

It should be noted that there are many possible indicators of success in the labour market. For example, simply holding a job might be considered a success. However, other considerations may also be important, including the nature of the job (whether it is skilled or unskilled, whether it is a career or dead-end type of position, and whether it is full- or part-time), how much the job pays, and any other monetary or non-wage benefits it offers. Unfortunately, most of this information is not available from the survey data.

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[8] In order to identify variables associated with earnings, a series of simple correlations and cross-tabulations between earnings and possible explanatory variables were carried out. While useful for identifying simple associations among variables, these analyses do not account for complicated interactions among explanatory factors. A multivariate regression of earnings against the same variables was computed to determine the extent to which the earnings pattern could be explained by the selected variables. A full analysis would likely involve a logistic regression with some form of step-by-step procedure for selecting a model.

To overcome this data limitation and to keep the analysis within the framework of this study, employment earnings has been selected as the indicator of success in the labour market, the premise being that the higher the income, the greater the degree of success.

Another important point is that the survey data only provide information on earnings for the year preceding the survey (1985), and thus give only a snapshot of each person's earnings. It is possible that some respondents' earnings were temporarily high or low for that year, and therefore did not reflect their true earnings. Such aberrations may confuse the interpretation of the statistical analysis.

Finally, the determination of employment earnings is a very complex process, whether it is for the whole population or only for those with a disability. Many factors influence earnings, including some that are difficult to measure, such as character, intelligence, creativity, perseverance, willingness and good luck. Moreover, those factors that are measurable interact with many others to provide a multitude of explanations for differences in individual earnings. What may explain one person's level of earnings may not explain another's. While a group variable (such as level of education) may, on occasion, explain differences in earnings, group factors do not always explain individual differences in earnings. Even when all the measurable variables discussed in earlier sections of this report had been included in the regression analysis, it was still only possible to account for about 40 percent of the variation in the earnings of persons with disabilities.

The Results

With these important cautionary notes in mind, the correlation and regression analysis points to the following observations.

- *Education:* The single most important factor determining earnings among persons with a disability is their level of education. This factor appears to outweigh all others, including the nature or severity of the disability, age, sex, or having an unmet need for technical aids. There is also a small association between earnings and the time of onset of disability relative to completion of

education. Those persons who become disabled before completing their education tend to fare better than those whose disability occurs after the end of their formal schooling.

- *Sex:* Whether a person with a disability is male or female is the second most important factor associated with his or her earnings, ranking closely behind level of education. To be disabled and female constitutes a double employment disadvantage. However, neither this finding nor the one on education is totally unexpected, since the same two factors also heavily influence the earnings of the general Canadian population.

- *Severity of disability:* In a somewhat distant third place in terms of importance is severity of disability. A person with a severe level of disability is more likely to have lower earnings than someone with a mild disability.

- *Work limitation:* Closely behind severity of disability in importance is whether the disabled person has a work limitation. Although work limitations are bound to have a negative impact on earnings, since they almost certainly limit the range of jobs available and the person's ability to perform, their effect on earnings does not appear to be particularly strong. This may be because the majority of disabled respondents had only slight work limitations, and in the HALS survey, no adjustments were made for degree of limitation.

- *Age:* At about the same level of importance as severity of disability and work limitation is age. Among disabled persons, increased age is associated with decreased earnings.

- *Nature of disability:* Nature of disability explains some of the variation in earnings. Mental disability ranks first in its association with lower earnings, followed by mobility and seeing disabilities, which are of almost equal importance. Speaking disabilities and those that limit agility follow next, showing a smaller influence on earnings. A hearing disability appears to have little negative effect on earnings. It should be cautioned that these results are undoubtedly influenced by the existence of multiple disabilities. For example, a hearing disability is least often accompanied by another disability, whereas disabilities related to agility and mobility are often found together, as are mental and speaking disabilities.

- *Transportation needs:* Although limited, the survey results concerning special transportation needs and their availability were included in the regression analysis. Persons with disabilities requiring special bus or van service appear to have lower earnings than those who do not need such a transportation service, although the need for a special service may simply be an indicator of a severe disability. For example, of those who require special transportation, 87.4 percent have annual earnings of less than $5,000, compared to 66.4 percent of those who do not. It also makes a difference whether special transportation services are available locally. A larger proportion of those needing the service, but not having access to it, have zero earnings than of those who do have access to such a service.

Conclusion

The findings of the landmark 1986 household survey of disability clearly show that, as a group, disabled persons are economically less well off than are Canadians in general. Persons with a disability are more likely than the population as a whole to endure poverty, be outside the labour force, have higher unemployment rates, receive less schooling, be employed in lower- and middle-level occupations, and take home smaller earnings. Moreover, disabled women appear to encounter greater economic disadvantage than their male counterparts.

The objective of this report has been to describe the economic difficulties faced by persons with disabilities, based on the 1986 HALS survey. Although its focus has been mainly descriptive and not analytical, it has also made an initial attempt to examine the factors associated with success, and failure, in the labour market. However, several research tasks remain to be completed before a surer and deeper understanding of the economic dimensions of disability can be gained.

First, there should be a more concentrated analytical effort, using regression analysis, to explore the relationships among the variables that influence labour-market success. For example, this report has shown at a very general level that education, sex, age, severity of disability, work limitations and type of disability are all important factors associated with success or failure in the labour market. Determining how these variables interact with one another (and with other variables) requires a statistical analysis of a type that was beyond the scope of this report.

Second, the questions on technical aids and services (social, education, transportation, accommodation) did not yield information on how these were related to economic outcome. Consequently, it was not possible to link the availability of, and access to, technical aids and services with success in the labour market. If another national survey on disability were to be undertaken, the questionnaire should be constructed in such a way as to yield information on factors associated with economic outcome. This

would improve our understanding of the economic obstacles faced by disabled persons who want to support themselves through paid work.

Third, the findings of the survey of persons with disabilities in institutions should be analyzed in depth. There is considerable insight to be gained from comparing the findings on the institutionalized population with those on persons with a severe level of disability who are not institutionalized. Bearing in mind that a major goal of society is to move more disabled persons from institutional to community care and independent living, it would be most valuable to undertake a comparative analysis of these two groups. For example, such an analysis would provide some insight into the factors which are associated with severely disabled persons successfully living outside of an institution. In all likelihood, it would show that the services and financial support provided by family and friends in such cases are significant.

Fourth, research should be undertaken on the findings of the survey of disabled children under the age of 15. From an economic and labour-market perspective, these findings should be examined to identify the barriers to education. Since education level appears to be the most significant factor associated with labour-market success among disabled adults, it is critical that disabled children be given all possible support in acquiring a high level of education and training.

In conclusion, it should be stated that the HALS survey has greatly expanded our understanding of the economic situation of disabled persons in Canada. However, if we are to benefit fully from its findings, a sustained research effort must be conducted, with input from disabled persons and the representatives of groups promoting their interests. These are the people who can provide extra insight into the meaning of the statistics. A purely statistical analysis cannot by itself produce the kind of understanding that is needed of the conditions that block the economic path of persons with disabilities, or of the changes that are required to improve their opportunities for economic success and independent living.